(b) if so, whether the GREF is finding it difficult to maintain it due to scarcity of money and manpower; and

(c) if so, whether Government propose to consider to assign the work of maintenance of the above highway to Public Works Department and provide it with sufficient Central aid for the purchase of heavy machinery etc.?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The total length of National Highway No. 22 is 424 Kms., of which is a stretch of 89 Kms from Wangtu to Pooh is with the General Reserve Engineer Force.

(b) and (c) No, Sir.

Payment for land acquired for seabird project

1674. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Karnataka Government has acquired 75 hectares of land required for extending the runway of the Airport at Seabird Project, Uttar Kannada District and transferred to same to Defence Department;

(b) if so, whether the Karnataka Government has requested the Government to pay the cost of the land worth Rs. 20 crores;

(c) whether the cost of land has been paid to Karnataka Government; and

(d) since the land has been given by the Karnataka Government, whether the Airport will be allowed for civilian purposes?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Government of Karnataka has recently agreed to acquire 75 hectares of land for extending the runway of the Airport at Seabird Project, Uttar Kannada District and to transfer the same free of cost/encumbrances to the Ministry of Defence. The issue of payment of Rs. 20 crores for the said land to the State Government, therefore, does not arise. The feasibility of using the Airport for civilian purposes has not

been examined since the land is yet to be acquired by the Government of Karnataka.

Air station at Rathnagiri, Maharashtra

1675. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether an air station is likely to be set up at Rathnagiri in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the steps being taken in this direction; and

(c) by when it would be operational?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Boosting framework of defence document with US

1676. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal for further boosting the framework of defence document with US signed last year;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the status of the framework?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) During the visit of Raksha Mantri to United States of America (USA) in June 2005, a document entitled 'New Framework for United States-India Defence Relationship' was signed. The New Framework is a statement of intent of the broad areas cooperation between the United States and India. It does not contain any commitments or obligations.